

were 100 to 200 armed men in the corridors of city hall at this time. After he resigned, a new chief was instantly sworn in. Melton told Rountree that he could not get his police force together well enough to restore order and that his resignation would allow the group to get “force enough to restore order.” Melton returned home only to be sent out of town the next day.¹³⁰

As bullets were flying through Brooklyn and the city’s government fell to armed politicians, men who were privy to the discussions of the Secret Nine, the Merchant’s Association, the Committee of Twenty-Five, the White Government Unions, and other organizations established a systematic program of banishment for black leaders and white Republicans. Many of those targeted for banishment were perceived as a threat by the leaders of the white community. The first group of black men identified by the whites was the Committee of Colored Citizens (CCC) assembled to hear the demands of the Committee of Twenty-Five and the White Declaration of Independence. Some of the men of the CCC were summarily found and arrested during the riot while others were arrested or coerced into leaving in the days and weeks following the riot.

During the riot, the WLI cooperated with the banishment campaign by detailing squads to arrest men named by the Secret

Nine.¹³¹ Others were allowed to remain in Wilmington as long as they “knew their place.” While only the primary leaders of the black community were named as targets for banishment, others were arrested during the activities on the tenth and eleventh for their safety. While the men behind the scenes only wished to see primary obstacles to white rule, such as attorneys and businessmen, leave, others added their own choices for banishment, carrying the arrest and confinement processes into the days after the riot. Much to the coup leaders’ despair, this secondary banishment campaign was out of their control and promised to prevent an end to hostilities and cripple the city.¹³²

By the end of the day on November 10, the white leaders of Wilmington had successfully manipulated the masses into open warfare. The beneficiaries of the violence were the white leaders who regained control of city affairs through the coup d’etat. In a multitude of ways, the foremost victims of the tragedy were the city’s African Americans, who suffered banishment, the fear of further murders, deaths of loved ones, destruction of property, exile into cold swampland, or injury from gunfire.

¹³⁰ Melton testified that he had heard armed men were headed to city hall to demand resignations and that as the old board was meeting, an armed crowd of men approached the building. Melton also recounted that Rountree “invited me out into the chamber of the board of finance and said that he would advise me to resign; that he thought he had control over the men, but he had just learned that he could not do anything with the men, meaning the Democrats; that he had no control over them, and they would not listen to him, and he would not be responsible for the consequence, and he advised me to resign, and I did so.” *Contested Election Case*, 364-5.

¹³¹ J. Allan Taylor led the banishment campaign for the Secret Nine. McDuffie, “Politics in Wilmington,” 719-720.

¹³² *Wilmington Messenger* November 12, 1898.